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Editorial: Towards a research agenda for the ‘actually existing’ Learning City

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Keri Facer & Magdalena Buchczyk

Introduction

Cities are getting interested in education and learning (again¹). Urban planners, geographers, international agencies and city leaders are beginning to adopt a language of ‘learning’ and ‘education’ to try to make sense of how cities and their inhabitants might adapt to contemporary challenges from economic inequality to sustainability. There are now international networks of ‘Smart Cities’ and calls for ‘Wisdom Cities’ (Hambleton, 2014); there are networks in which policymakers, industrial partners and academics who see the city as a ‘laboratory’ share information about experimental learning²; and above all there is the longstanding (dating back to at least 1972) aspiration amongst a growing international network of cities to be recognised as ‘Education’ or ‘Learning Cities’ in which schools, universities, workplaces and civil society work together to promote learning across the lifecourse.

From one perspective, of course, it is possible to dismiss such developments simply as another in the long list of Brownie badges that cities increasingly accrue to promote themselves in competition with each other – alongside badges for ‘resilient cities’, ‘happy cities’ and so forth. From another, this increased attention to learning as central to the formation of viable cities, generating investment, policy action and producing real effects on the ground, merits critical scrutiny. This introduction to the Special Issue on Learning Cities aims to explore the nature of the inquiry that might be adequate to dealing with the complex interconnections between space, place, policy, education, culture, materiality and technology that are necessarily engaged when learning becomes a focus of attention at the scale of the city.

What is a city? Why would ‘cities’ be interested in learning?

A city can be understood, in Brenner & Schmit’s (2015) terms, as a theoretical rather than an empirical category. A city does not, in any empirical sense ‘exist’ independently of the flows of people, resources and information that connect it to the countryside, towns, to other cities, to informational resources and governance structures that constrain and enable its existence. To call something a city is an ideological act that draws boundaries that cannot contain empirical reality. Instead of conceptualising a city as some sort of ‘container’ or ‘organisation’, then, we might be better to think of cities as ‘relational entities’ (Amin, 2007) or dynamic *processes* (Brenner and Schmidt, 2015), as ‘gatherings’ and ‘assemblages’ of human, material and discursive elements that are both relatively stable and constantly changing (Amin and Thrift, 2002). A city then, is more verb than noun, an ongoing discursive and material process characterised by complexity (Batty, 2009) that emerges through the myriad everyday interactions between inhabitants and the physical materialities of the space (Pink, 2012).

Nor is any such city singular: complex processes of emergence generate ‘patterns of inequality spawned through agglomeration and intense competition for space’ (Batty 2008). As different

¹ Reference Education Priority Areas, History of Learning Cities in 1990s, be clear that this isn’t the first time.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/european-network-living-labs-enoll-explained>

bodies work on and are worked on by the city in different ways (Grosz, 1998), cities are constituted differently by gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, wealth and age (Scott, A. 2010; Watson, 2000; Armstrong, 2007).

This recognition of the complexity of urban life is one of the reasons why urban planners and city leaders are increasingly interested in learning. As modernist central planning is increasingly seen to fail in conditions of complexity, anticipatory-, adaptive- and emergent- governance is being promoted as an alternative guiding principle for city leadership (Quay, 2010; Camacho, 2009). Such governance is premised upon a view of cities as terrains for experiments in living, a framing that positions both city leaders and inhabitants as learning through practices of improvisation and adaptation (McFarlane, 2011; Amin, 2014). How a city learns, who in a city is learning, and in particular, how a city can learn with, through and alongside its citizens (whose diverse experiences are necessarily different from those of city leaders) therefore become important questions (Greyling, 2014).

The idea of the city that learns is also becoming associated with a utopian framing of the city as a site in which better futures can be invented, practiced and experimented with (Evans, 2011). Such an aspiration is driven, in part, by despair at the capacity of nation states or international regimes to address contemporary problems; see for example the popularity of books such as Barber's *'If Mayors Ruled the World: Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities'* or Katz and Bradley's *'The Metropolitan Revolution: How Cities and Metros are fixing our broken politics and fragile economy'*. This environment, in which cities are seen as 'our best hope for achieving sustainable development' (Morgan, A. 2009) focuses attention on how city inhabitants can be encouraged to learn a range of new skills - from more inclusive democratic practices to new responses to sustainable development goals. While such claims need necessarily to be approached with scepticism, there is, nonetheless, emerging evidence that it is at the scale of the city that actions to mitigate climate change are most likely to be taken and most likely to have the necessary and urgent impacts needed (Bhowmik et al, 2018).

Such utopian visions, as well as the urgent environmental and social challenges demanding changed social practices, see cities increasingly promoting lifelong learning directed towards particular social and economic outcomes, and to value particular sorts of learning over others. It is here that the Learning Cities movement comes in and it is here that critical, interdisciplinary educational research is urgently needed. To what extent is such an orientation to learning in the city adequate or appropriate to contemporary conditions of city life?

The Learning Cities Movement

The idea of a 'Learning City' has its roots in the pedagogical traditions of popular and radical education developed in the 1970s, in which learning, social and political change were understood as closely articulated (Freire 1970, Shaw 1973). Such ideas inspired the influential UNESCO Faure Report of 1972, connecting the educational endeavour to other areas of social development and urban change (Elfert 2015) and were still present in the Delors 'Learning to Be' report of 1996 and the following World Conference on Higher Education of Adults in Hamburg, where, as Tuckett argues

Its vision was similar to that of Raymond Williams who argued in 1958 that at times of social change, adults turn to learning in order to understand what is happening, to adapt to change, and most importantly to shape it. Or as Paulo Freire put it, the task is reading the world, not just the word (Freire, 1975; Horton, 1990; UNESCO, 1997; Williams 1958/1993). (Tuckett, 2017)

In these texts, the purpose of lifelong learning is to ensure that governments fulfil 'their first responsibility', namely, to ensure that their citizens 'can think' (Tuckett 2017) and to work towards much wider social aspirations 'guided by the Utopian aim of steering the world towards greater sense of responsibility and greater solidarity' (Delors, 1996: 51).

This renewed interest in lifelong learning was also associated, however, strongly with economic instrumentalism. The OECD publication *Lifelong Learning for All* (1996) of the same period, articulated the link between adult education and economic strength and offered a foundation for a vision of the Learning City as a range of initiatives to address the technological and economic challenges of a 'knowledge economy'

These Faure, Delors and OECD reports as well as wider conferences and debates on adult education, laid the groundwork for the development of the ambiguous contemporary concept of the 'Learning City' that we know today (Hamilton and Jordan 2011, Kearns 2012, Longworth 2006, Osborne et al 2013, Scott 2015, Watson and Wu 2015).

Today, UNESCO, which coordinates the international network of 'Learning Cities', defines a learning city as one which

[...] effectively mobilizes its resources in every sector to:

- *promote inclusive learning from basic to higher education;*
- *revitalize learning in families and communities;*
- *facilitate learning for and in the workplace;*
- *extend the use of modern learning technologies;*
- *enhance quality and excellence in learning; and*
- *foster a culture of learning throughout life.*

In so doing it will create and reinforce individual empowerment and social cohesion, economic and cultural prosperity, and sustainable development." (UNESCO, IfLL 2017)

Implicit in the genealogy of the Learning City, therefore, is a tension between managerial paradigms that privilege particular forms of desirable learning toward economic goals and social cohesion and a more unruly concept of learning and education that prioritises social justice and recognises sometimes conflicting grassroots agendas.

Given this ambivalence, it is unsurprising that critics of the contemporary framing of the 'learning city' argue see it as simply the 'ideological froth' of neoliberal transformations of the knowledge economy (Plumb et al 2007). While others within the network and working alongside it, argue the case for a richer more complex normative vision for a learning city as engaging not only with preparation of citizens for economic competition, but with political and experiential education (Scott, L, 2015); with environmental awareness and sustainability (Kearns, 2012; Pavlova, 2018); and with the more emancipatory goals of critical adult education traditions (Duke, 2011 quoted in Kearns, 2012).

Despite, or perhaps because of this potentially generative ambiguity, the Learning City agenda risks becoming, as others have observed of the parallel Smart Cities landscape, detached from and potentially damaging towards what Shelton et al, have called the 'actually existing' city. Vanolo (2013), observing the Smart Cities movement, for example, documents how international networks of cities necessarily frame the city as '*a field of intervention by consultants, business and technicians*' distancing decision-making from democratic processes and the lived experiences of cities' inhabitants. In these networks, Vanolo argues, processes of international benchmarking produce cities in relations of competition with each other; responsabilise citizens and cities to respond to

particular internationally defined agendas in prescribed ways which produce in turn, new inequalities; and facilitate public-private partnerships and international consultancy above engagement with the expertise and knowledge of citizens (Vanolo, 2013). Such practices are seen as disciplining cities and citizens, and as dominated by the interests of those cities that have the resources for mobility and self-promotion.

From this perspective, cities' new attention to lifelong learning and the development of international networks and benchmarks for what should constitute a learning city, irrespective of the ambiguity or generosity of their aspirations, could be understood as structurally associated with international processes of colonisation, coercion and control (Contu & Grey, 2003; Biesta 2013b).

The Learning Cities movement, to date, has seemed more aware of these risks than the related Smart Cities movements, has resisted benchmarking and has actively attempted to recognise the diversity and plurality of its constituent cities and citizens. Nonetheless, the network has gone on to develop a set of metrics against which cities might be judged and there are increasing calls to develop evaluation mechanisms (Osborne et al, 2013). Equally, leading voices in the network are advocating specific models of governance and partnership (Ofei-Manu et al, 2018; Pavlova, 2018) that distance decisions about learning from democratic debate while hardwiring particular actors – industry, universities and schools as central to framing the discussion about the value and purpose of learning in a city. Such governance structures are associated with making judgements about the sort of learning that should be valued in the city rather than acting as platforms for supporting learning agendas to be set by or responsive to the needs, interests and political and economic concerns of inhabitants:

'city governance and partnerships should offer operational strategies enabling citizens, as they take on their role as agents of change and transformation, to directly relate learning to their daily activities in their immediate environment and make informed judgements leading to conducive actions in daily life' (Yang and Yorozu, 2015, 4).

The risk here, as Shelton et al (2014) and Macfarlane & Söderström (2017) have observed, is that the governance blueprints and practices intended to support learning in the city, can in fact detach city planning from the 'actually existing' practices of learning in the city. They can also come to fetishise learning as a social intervention strategy at the expense of other interventions and activities required to achieve the more substantial goals of social justice. Shelton et al, for example, describe the case of the 'Digital OnRamps' Smart City project in Philadelphia, in which online training was given to enable inhabitants of poorer areas of the city to gain digital skills, while at the same time building new business and industrial parks in areas of the city to which these inhabitants could not gain access due to transport and other infrastructure issues (Shelton et al, 2014).

The challenge then, as initiatives to foster Learning Cities grow is to (re)connect this international agenda with the complex, material, lived realities of everyday learning in cities and ensure that this attention does not come to destroy the very thing that it seeks to nurture. The Learning City, like the Smart City, is neither an unalloyed good nor an unalloyed evil, it is a set of ideas, discourses and practices that deserve scrutiny and attention by researchers working in the field of education alongside those researchers already exploring these issues in the fields of cultural geography, urban studies and anthropology. In other words, it is important to understand the 'actually existing' Learning City that is at stake on the ground.

What scholarship is adequate for understanding learning and the city?

Understanding the actually existing Learning City as a city-level project is an agenda that is being, with some noteworthy exceptions (e.g. Sacre & Visscher, 2017; Tuckett, 2017; Biesta and Cowell, 2016), spearheaded by scholars working outside the field of education. The 2010 Special Issue *Learning Cities in a Knowledge Based Society*, for example, reported on a conference with over 100 papers that was convened by an editorial group comprising sociologists, planners, geographers and economists. Similarly, a key text in this field, McFarlane's 'Learning the City', is a book by a cultural geographer that does not mention the educational institutions of the city or reference relevant educational scholarship while nonetheless mobilising the language and theories of socio-cultural learning. At the same time, it is in the Journal *Progress in Human Geography* that the utility of 'thinking through education' to understand the city is being argued (Thiem, 2009). The limited number of recent Special Issues edited by educators that speak directly to the Learning Cities agenda (Osborne et al, 2013/ Valdez Coteria et al 2018) are written by those deeply committed to the Learning Cities network and so tend towards the celebratory and the normative rather than offering (with notable exceptions e.g. Osborne et al, 2013) a disinterested account of contemporary practices.

This is not to say, we should be clear, that educational research does not attend to questions of learning in urban settings. Far from it. There is obviously a long and substantial field of inquiry in particular in the fields of urban education, cultural studies, youth studies and adult education that has been strengthened over the last decade by a spatial turn (Gulson & Symes, 2007; Morgan, 2012; Hemingway & Armstrong, 2012; Nespor, 2002/2008) led by educational geographers working with a deep commitment and connection to combining geographical and educational research and theory.

What is needed today, however, is an engagement with learning in the city *qua* city, rather than the city interrogated through the practices of distinct neighbourhoods and communities, sites of public pedagogy, 'space' in general or 'context' for formal educational backgrounds. Here educators and educational researchers have a significant contribution to make to addressing the fundamental question being raised by city leaders, planners and urban theorists: how does a city learn? And how/should such learning be directed to enable citizens and cities to survive the very substantial challenges that they will be facing over the coming half century?

In what follows we sketch a landscape of research initiatives that potentially speaks to the theorisation and empirical study of the Learning City as city and highlight how and where the papers in this Special Issue connect with this field. Such a sketch cannot be comprehensive, rather it is presented here to both note and (hopefully) strengthen productive emerging points of connection between scholars of education and those working in the fields of cultural geography and urban studies. Our secondary intention is to encourage those educators, city leaders and urban planners currently attempting to shape the Learning Cities agenda in their cities and at an international scale to engage with these rich resources.

Thinking through assemblages and networks

One productive line of inquiry that is beginning to sustain critical analysis of the Learning City as city, draws on Science and Technology Studies and anthropology and works with 'assemblages theory', a theory in which places, institutions and practices are understood as co-emergent through social, material and discursive practices and entities (Anderson & McFarlane, 2011). In this framing, educational and learning practices are no longer seen as constrained within discrete institutions, but (as Doreen Massey says of places) are understood as '*articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and*

understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, or a region or even a continent' (Massey. 2005:154).

This assemblage theory underpins much urban theory that attends to questions of learning in the city today (McFarlane, 2011) and is beginning to make itself felt in educational research. Reciprocally, scholars such as Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk (2015), starting from within the school, are making the case for theorising learning as emerging within complex, evolving networks.

Learning is an effect of the networks of the material, humans and non-humans, that identify certain practices as learning, which also entails a value judgement about learning something worthwhile. Thus teaching is not simply about the relationships between humans, but is also about the networks of humans and things through which teaching and learning are translated and enacted. Teaching and learning do not exist, and cannot be identified, separately from the networks through which they are themselves enacted. They are not independent transcendental entities or processes, but immanent assemblages". (Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk 2015: 8).

Jan Nesor's (2013) ethnographic study of schools as deeply interconnected with flows of people, materials, institutions and regulations provides powerful examples of the strength of this approach. Equally, Pink and Noblit's (2008) analysis of educational practices as key sites of transformation in flows of capital shows how education functions not as a discrete set of institutions but as fundamentally enmeshed in practices of producing difference in cities. Lipman, equally, explores how educational practices are implicated in solidifying neoliberal city policies in ways that result in gentrification, displacement, democratic deficit and the policing and pathologisation of communities (Lipman, P, 2010; Lipman 2011). Critically here, what we are not seeing are studies of cities separate from educational practices, or educational institutions that treat the city as inert or inconvenient 'context', but an attention to educational practices as working on the dynamic flows of people, resources, capital within the city.

The first paper (Facer and Buchczyk) in this Special Issue draws on this tradition to develop a theory of the 'learning infrastructure' in the city. Drawing particularly on the concept of 'lively infrastructure' (Amin, 2014) the paper offers a detailed 11-month case study of the city of Bristol, England, tracing how learning infrastructures are produced, accessed and reshaped by individuals facing challenges in terms of mental health, economic exclusion and precarious citizenship. In so doing, the paper argues that learning in the city can be understood as a social infrastructure (Simone, 2011) that is discursive, material and affective; deeply interconnected with other city infrastructures particularly childcare and transport; and capable of morphing to create both radical new forms of learning activity as well as consolidating existing practices of exclusion and inequality. Such learning infrastructures are not merely 'out there' as a pre-existing reality, but are the product of active engagement by users, connectors and creators who constitute the diverse learning activities of the city as infrastructure. This day-to-day process of participation, nurture and care, however, is under threat in conditions of austerity, as key nodes, relationships and resources are being eroded. In such conditions new social actors are emerging to stimulate new learning infrastructures organised around economic critique and social mobilisation.

These common theoretical starting points derived from Science and Technology Studies, Assemblages and Infrastructure theory, potentially open up opportunities for mutual understanding and engagement between scholars in education, cultural geography and urban studies to engage with the study of the actually existing Learning City.

Thinking through history and existing assets

The spatial turn towards a focus on the city has also been productively accompanied in recent years by a historical turn that seeks to recover and learn from the past examples of research and practice in city-wide thinking about education. In particular, the experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, from Education Priority Areas to anarchist education movements, as well as the thriving if stratified adult education sector (Tuckett, 2017) are providing particularly fertile ground for scholars working on city-wide learning today. Consider the contemporary resonances of Carr & Lynch's 1968 arguments about the potential for a city to be mobilised for critical and challenging learning : *'an environment for growth would be exposed, accessible and diverse, more open both physically and psychologically, more responsive to individual initiative and control. It would invite exploration and reward; it would encourage manipulation, renovations and self-initiated changes in many kinds. It would contain surprises and novel experiences, challenges to cognition and action'* (1968: 1287). Cathy Burke's leadership in this area is notable, recovering both (with Adam Wood) the radical experiments of city-wide learning in the US³ of the 1960s and (with Ken Jones) producing a new appreciation of the work of Colin Ward, urban planner and educator, to think through anarchist approaches to learning and the city today (Burke & Jones, 2014).

Importantly, this historical perspective also connects with the field of community-development and a repositioning of communities not as in deficit but as active creators and makers of community assets and commons (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1996). Here there is increased attention to schools and universities not as isolated beacons of education in a blasted landscape of ignorance, but as 'anchor' organisations (or, as Hambleton (2014) puts it, rooted organisations), that are able (potentially) to connect deeply over time and space to the communities of which they are a part, and in which the institution is seen as building upon and working in collaboration with the different forms of knowledge that exist in the city that surrounds them. Such a framing has been typical of many studies of urban education, from the field of new literacy studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998) to the detailed ethnographies of children's movements between home and school (e.g. Pollard & Filer, 1996).

In this issue Brennan and Cochrane's paper exemplifies this approach. It explores through detailed case studies and interviews with over 180 participants, the development of four city-university partnerships that seek to build equitable relations between the city and community. Characterising their four city-university dynamics as aspirational, glocal, regenerative and transformational they document clearly how the generic phrase 'anchor institution' can mean very different things in different settings. They draw attention to the multiplicity of both cities and universities and the deep historical roots that underpin tensions in this dynamic between city and university

This historical perspective from the anglo-sphere is complemented by the recovery of urban critical pedagogy movements that have their roots in Latin America, Indian and African traditions as we discuss below.

Thinking through resistant subjectivities – using critical pedagogy, educational philosophy and critical geography

One of the central concerns voiced by critics of Learning Cities and the 'learnification' of adult education and lifelong learning, is that these discourses assume and seek to produce a particular

³ The Harvard Education Review Special Issue on Architecture and Education, Vol 39, Issue 4 was subject of a recent series of seminars led by Drs Burke and Wood at Cambridge and contains a series of proposals for thinking learning and the city together.

sort of desirable future human – usually compliant and adapted to neoliberal economics (Plumb, 2007, Biesta, 2013). Such a position is being productively challenged by a generative combination of critical geography, educational philosophy and critical pedagogy.

For example, the deep tradition of educational philosophy that draws on roots in Dewey and Arendt (e.g. Biesta, 2006; Osberg, 2017) frames education, in contrast, as a process of bringing into being subjects and subjectivities that cannot be predicted in advance. Education (from this perspective framed in opposition to ‘learning’) is understood not as a means of creating pre-determined subjects, but as a risky practice that opens up new subjectivities. Ford (2013) productively puts this position into dialogue with geographical literature (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1996) and in so doing, recasts Harvey’s ‘right to the city’ as an educational imperative, understood as the right to the encounter with difference in order to enable the process of coming into being in the world. The very language of rights to the city, which comprise the right to encounter with difference and the right to encounter and develop new subjectivities, is therefore presented by Ford as a set of *educational* rights. Such an analysis engenders a responsibility on the part of educators to the defence of the city as a site of plurality and encounter. To quote from Ford at some length, geographical and the educational concerns are fundamentally, in his view, intertwined:

The question, then, is how can educators ‘create and keep in existence a “worldly space” through which new beginnings can come into presence?’ (p. 107). [...] The possibility of the existence of such a worldly space where the educational encounter, facilitated by the educator, can occur is directly tied to the material and social organization of society. This means first that the responsibility for the educational encounter involves a responsibility on the part of the educator to struggle for ‘greater democratic control over the production and utilization of the surplus’ (Harvey, 2009, p. 328), which is to say that it necessarily entails a struggle over the means of value production. Second and relatedly, because the encounter with alterity demands the presence of different subjects and social groups, a presence which is always the result of struggle, the responsibility for the educational encounter demands a responsibility for supporting the struggles of social groups to assert their right to recognition and participation, not only in the city, but in the school and other educational sites as well (Ford, 2013; 308)

Others, equally concerned with a discourse of lifelong learning as lifelong disciplining of the subject to the market, have turned to critical pedagogy traditions as a means of reframing education as a practice of resistance to neoliberalism. Here, the deficit framing of urban inhabitants is recast as a more positive engagement with difference (Pratt-Adams et al, 2010) in which pedagogies of mobilisation (Choudry, 2009) and insurgent citizenship (Holston, 2009) characterise social movement building. Such practices are understood to be premised on grassroots knowledge creation through the encounter between different life experiences and ways of knowing (Appadurai, 2001). Reminiscent of earlier ‘houses of the people’ (Kohn, 200X?) these studies explore how learning communities struggle with the challenges of living together and creating sustainable lives across difference. They examine practices of urban experimentation (Wendler, 2014) and ‘guerilla urbanism’ (Hou, 2010), practices characterised by transgression, reclaiming, pluralising and contesting spaces in the city.

Such work has the potential to be put into productive dialogue with critical pedagogy as it is being thought in schools (Duncan-Andrade and Morrell, 2008; Fischman & McLaran, 2005). Here, a Learning City might be reframed not as a site for the production of compliant bodies, but as an urgent inquiry into the means by which a good life can be built together across difference. In Gruenewald’s terms, such a pedagogy would aim to ‘(a) identify, recover and create material spaces

and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (reinhabitation); and (b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonisation' (Gruenewald, 2003).

In this issue, *Morrison & Erstad's* piece on agentic urban learning speaks to some of these perspectives. Here, they position agentic learning as fundamentally future oriented, enabling young people to understand the materials they have to hand both personally and in community and how these might be reconfigured in future. They draw on two traditions - educational research, which is informed by socio-cultural theory which understands agency as developed through mediational means; and urban design, which is informed by cultural geography and speculative design practices. Taken together, they explore how young people's urban agency is built through interactions with mediational means - from everyday materiality to intentional mobilisation of technology. They foreground how agentic learning is a practice that focuses on key transitions in the interactions between students and the city and critical encounters with alterity – whether the experiences of young migrants in Oslo, or of students and city dwellers in Cape Town.

Equally, in this issue, *Manchester and Cope's* article examines the sorts of digital literacies that might be needed to enable citizens to challenge, disrupt and claim ownership of various Smart City agendas. Based on a detailed ethnography study of a major international Smart City programme as it is operationalised in a UK city, they discuss the ways in which citizens are systematically marginalised in the process of Smart City making and argue that an approach that focusses on situating learning, recognising unequal relations of power, knowledge and resources and the diversity of citizens' experiences of technologies through critical learning processes is a positive alternative to current dominant discourses in the industrial-academic-nexus shaping Smart City agendas.

Tracing relations across and between multiple sites

The last decade has seen the adoption of practices of multi-sited ethnography (originating in anthropology) within the field of education (Pierides, 2010), as well as a significant effort to synthesise the literature on public pedagogy (Sandlin et al, 2011) and networked learning (Leander et al, 2010). Taken together, these moves offer both new methodological directions and coherent theoretical framing for attending to learning practices in highly diverse sites across a city. They disrupt the primacy of the school and university as pre-eminent sites of learning, foregrounding the learning practices that become visible once the lens for learning is widened to include public spaces (e.g. Erstad & Sefton Green, 2013; Sacre & De Visscher, 2017), social movements (e.g. Appadurai, 2001) museums and galleries (e.g. Ellsworth, 2005), digital media (Drotner et al, 2008) and the deep and entangled connections between these practices that can be traced through multi-sited ethnography.

In this Issue Robin et al's paper explores how moments of disruption and crisis, often unanticipated, both destabilise the urban infrastructure of the city and generate opportunities for learning in and by cities. Taking as their focus Cape Town's response to the 2008 xenophobic attacks, looting and violence against foreigners, and based on 30 in-depth interviews, this paper explores how these events made visible critical contemporary concerns – racial tensions and violence toward black (foreign) nationals – that led to the development of ad-hoc partnerships and civil society actions that underpinned the development of new knowledge and institutional learning. However, they also document how such insights can be fragmentary and temporary, fail to achieve lasting traction and political transformation. In so doing, they show how the learning processes in cities can emerge temporarily, configure specific learning assemblages but fail to be aligned, ultimately, with the practices of city leadership networks.

Such multi-sited studies also reconnect youth studies and adult education studies to urban education, enabling inquiry into how learning practices are mobilised in the making of futures in conditions of uncertainty (eg. Schilling et al, 2015; Morrow, 2000). See, for example Atencio et al's (2009) study of street skateboarding and habitus and the development of all girl skateboarding as a means of resisting male domination of street spaces. See also Bourgois's conversations with crack dealers as a form of school ethnography exploring what sorts of pedagogies and skills are present in these practices, what sorts of strategies for survival being honed (1996) Similarly, Cahill's (2000) study explores urban teenagers' strategies for negotiating their neighbourhoods, documenting the way in which they learn to 'read' the environment, the sorts of 'street literacies' being developed. More recently, Sefton-Green and Erstad's (2018) collection on the 'unschooled society' draws on these traditions and makes a case for a resistance to the pedagogisation of society beyond the school walls.

In this issue, Poyntz and colleagues argue that contemporary cities are marked by 'parallel non-formal arts learning economies' that are under-researched and under-acknowledged by researchers and policy makers. They make the case that this sector constitutes an urban infrastructure within contemporary learning cities, but one that is 'marked by boundaries that seem hard to pin down'. Offering a ten-year historical study of the sector in three global cities, Toronto, Vancouver and London, the authors analyse the constitutive tensions latent in this work: traditions of youth work dedicated to building youth capacity to participate as citizens and youth voice in the city exist alongside specific aims to develop young people's social integration and economic employability. They discuss the way that the tension between empowerment and socialisation that has long characterised the sector is being intensified under conditions of neoliberalism in cities. Capturing much of the debate about the contested purpose and value of lifelong learning that we have already discussed in this introduction, the authors argue that the non-formal arts learning sector 'straddles market forces, state agendas and a desire to transform these relationships by intervening in the learning city's infrastructures of provision.'

Learning, in these accounts, is understood as a much richer and more complex phenomenon than that suggested both by the international policy narratives advocating for particular forms of lifelong learning for economic and social transformation, and by those critiquing such positions who seek to focus the attention of educators and educationalists to the school or university alone.

Thinking through place and body

While public pedagogy and informal learning traditions have drawn attention to intentional learning practices outside the school, ongoing dialogues between anthropology and educational philosophy and methodology are generating interest in the way the materiality of the city 'itself' educates. Exchanges between philosopher of education Jan Masschelein and anthropologist Tim Ingold, for example, have generated the powerful concept of the city as a site that 'educates attention' and through which learning is reframed as a process of dwelling in the city. From this perspective, practices such as walking are reframed as learning practices as city and inhabitant evolve together (Edensor, 2010). Watkins (2017) traces, in this vein, the ways that 'space' can 'teach' through cues and invitations. Morris (2004) and Pinder (2011) explore walking as practices of transgression and celebration. Pink (2012) connects such insights with an attention to the everyday life of learning and sustainability work. The key issue here is that learning is framed as a co-emergence of people and the materiality of the city. As Ingold observes:

it is by walking along from place to place, and not by building up from local particulars, that we come to know what we do. Yet as we walk, we do not so much traverse the exterior

surface of the world as negotiate a way through a zone of admixture and interchange between the more or less solid substances of the earth and the volatile medium of air'
(Ingold, 2010: 121)

Ellsworth (2005) pushes these perspectives further by focusing attention on the body and the somatic experience as the trigger for learning, discussing the ways that city sites and spaces initiate what she calls the 'pedagogic hinge' – the moment of wonder, of letting go, when what she calls the 'learning self' comes into being via bodily sensations into cognition. In all these perspectives, the city as a learning resource is understood not at a cognitive level, but as an embodied phenomenon, experienced on an ongoing basis as the background to life in the city; a background that is teaching, creating variously vibrant, dangerous and stratified sites of learning experienced through bodies and sensations. Here, learning is not reducible as a practice to the development of docile bodies for neoliberalism, nor is it equated to the practices of education as encounter with alterity, but reframed as dwelling, foregrounding the role of the body and of motion in the formation of subjects and places in the city.

In this issue, Lido & Osborne introduce the way that life logging and sensing can be used to trace adult learners' movements around the city, building insights into the patterns of mobility that characterise the journeys of different communities within the city. Interestingly, they note that increasing mobility in the city is associated with higher access to what they term 'lifewide literacies', irrespective of economic status. Do such findings begin to make the case through large scale statistical methods combined with GIS systems, for the sorts of observations about the relationship between bodies, dwelling and place that are being made in anthropological, ethnographic and walking based studies? It is not yet clear, but there is a generative conversation to be had between these perspectives.

Conclusion

Taken together, these theoretical resources and empirical studies provide a number of potentially productive points of departure for a research field that may begin to be adequate to the challenge of understanding the 'actually existing' Learning City. They draw our attention in particular to *learning* as a practice of embodied dwelling and *education* as an encounter with alterity, both of which take place through dynamic social, historical and material assemblages that constitute the city.

From this perspective, the attention of the urban planner and educator in the actually existing learning city should be drawn towards the everyday practices of learning in the city and towards the maintenance of the richness and complexity of such practices. In particular, they can be understood to have a responsibility for creating conditions that can enable a city's inhabitants and institutions—whether universities or youth clubs, activists or tech developers, refugees or civil society organisations, arts practitioners or street workers – to come together in dynamic encounters to generate the collective learning practices and educational encounters needed to address the problems, concerns and issues that they themselves identify. In this work, understanding how city streets, parks and transport systems function to invite and enable such encounters and participation will be as important as networking schools, colleges and universities. Understanding that a learning city should be as concerned with rights to the city, not simply responsabilising citizen adaptation to futures determined elsewhere and understanding that education and learning are not subordinate to but productive of social reality, is essential.

To inform new approaches to thinking and leading learning cities, a profoundly multi-disciplinary research effort is required that draws on the disciplines of anthropology, cultural geography, urban

studies alongside education and learning sciences. This is an effort that is yet to find its natural home and the papers in this Special Issue can only begin to gesture towards the complexity that is required to develop this agenda.

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